1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

The rest of Nupe Kingdom was divided up into smaller and larger

'countries' comprising each a town with its dependent villages and *tunga* which were administered as fiefs through feudal lords or *egba*. The *egba*—a member of the royal house or of the office nobility, or a court slave—received the fief from the king together with his rank with which the fief remained permanently linked. Mokwa was known as the town of the *Shaba*, Eggā as the town of the *Ndeji*, Kutigi and Enagi belonged to the *Ndatwaki*, and so on. Promotion to a higher rank brought with it appointment to another, more lucrative, fief. The feudal lord himself lived in the capital and rarely visited his possession. The local affairs, the collection of tax, were in charge of his representative, one of his slaves or serfs who was residing on his lands as *egbagi*, Small Delegate. Of the tax collected in these fiefs, again a money tax, a quarter went to the king and three-quarters were retained by the *egba*, who returned a small share to his *egbagi*, salary and commission in one. Sometimes the towns or districts also paid an additional tribute in kind both to *Etsu* and *egba*. I have been able to collect some data about the tax levied in these areas. The uniform information which I obtained from different sources leads me to believe that the facts are substantially correct. The town Kutigi, according to my informants, paid under *Etsu* Umaru a money tax of 20,000 cowries (about 10*s*.) to the *Etsu* through the *egba*; to the *egba* himself 10,000 cowries (5*s*.) and to the *egbagi* 5,000 cowries (2*s*. 6*d*.). In addition to this, the people of Kutigi sent the *Etsu* 20 mats of the kind which has made Kutigi the centre of a famous mat industry, worth over £1, 4 bundles of corn worth about 7*s*. 'for the king's horses', and 10 mats and 1 bundle of corn to the *egba*. In modern money, the total tax of the town which at that time had eight *efu* and a population of perhaps 500, amounted to between £2 and £3.[1]

The feudal lord in Bida was responsible to the king for law and order in his district. The appointment of the village chief was, again, subject to royal confirmation. The overlordship of the king also implied the right of appeal of the villagers to the king against oppression or injustice from their feudal lord.[2] Lastly, the *egbagi*, together with the village chief, administered justice in the smaller cases and sent all bigger cases to Bida, where the *egba* himself would plead the case of his tenants before the court of *Etsu* and *Alkali*.

A variety of the fiefs just discussed were bestowed on individuals, relatives, courtiers, or favourites of the king, as personal fiefs, independent of rank and office. Even women could hold fiefs of this kind. These fiefs were sometimes hereditary and sometimes reclaimed by the king after the death of the holder. They were very small, single towns or villages, but one person could hold two or more such fiefs—which, however, were never adjacent lest the power in the hands of one person

[1] Oldfield reports that in 1832–4 (i.e. under *Etsu* Usman) Eggā, one of the largest towns of Nupe at that time, paid an annual tax of 120,000 cowries, that is, about £3 (Laird and Oldfield, op. cit., ii, p. 39). This fits in very well with the data I obtained.

[2] The people of Mokwa once availed themselves of this right to lodge a complaint against their feudal lord. When I asked my informants what the result had been, they shrugged their shoulders and said: 'The *Etsu* promised to help us; but does one Fulani go against another Fulani?'

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

with its large population of non-farmers, should have developed the practice of money expenditure more extensively than the villages, and adopted money expenditure in certain instances in which, in the village, gifts and contributions in kind were the custom. The universal practice nowadays of giving and accepting presents of kola-nuts, for example, appears to have spread from the town, and to have replaced gifts of food or sorghum beer. Of similar changes in other fields we possess even more concrete evidence: thus the name-giving ceremony or funeral feast involves to-day contributions in money by guests and relations; in Mohammedan districts it is also customary to distribute alms (again in money) among the local Mallams. In the traditional form these kinship ceremonies implied gifts in kind, i.e. contributions of food and sorghum beer for the feast. Formerly, also, every household used to produce its own beer; to-day the manufacture of beer is limited to certain households so that the other families are obliged to buy it for money. Moreover, sorghum beer has been replaced in the town by palm-wine, which, as palm-kernels are largely imported from districts outside Nupe, must again be bought (see p. 234).

It is necessary to emphasize that this change represents a change of customs and fashion, and a change in the *form* of expenditure, rather than a change, or an increase, of expenditure itself. We shall, in fact, see later that the modern Mohammedan burial, for example, may come cheaper than the pagan ceremony, although in the latter contributions and gifts were largely in kind. In other words, the symbols of wealth are changing and becoming more unified, being adjusted to the symbols of wealth which have been adopted and standardized by the social and cultural *élite* of the country.

How, then, are money reserves and wealth in general accumulated? One method, which is widespread in Nupe, is to hoard money by burying it. Sometimes valuables, above all, precious beads, take the place of money, and are buried or concealed otherwise in a safe place. In a number of court cases over inheritance the question of discovering the hidden wealth (money or beads) of the testator played an important part. Another illustration of the practice of hoarding money came to my knowledge in connexion with inquiries into the continued use of cowrie-shell currency.[1] It is generally known in Nupe country that when cowrie-shells were finally replaced by English money and the former currency declared worthless many people buried their cowrie-shells in the hope that, some day, they might become legal tender again. Once I asked certain informants in Kutigi if they could show me any cowrie-shells. They said that they had none, and that cowrie-shells were no longer to be found in the country. I said that I was prepared to pay money for them, whereupon large baskets full of cowries suddenly turned up, and, the rumour having spread that the white man was buying cowries, I had to do my best not to be inundated with the suddenly rediscovered currency.

Another method of accumulating capital is the investment in interest-

[1] See 'A Ritual Currency in Nigeria—A Result of Culture Contact', in 'Notes and News', *Africa*, 1937, 3.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XIX

ECONOMIC BALANCE: EXCHANGE

121 IN the discussion of economic balance we approach a group of questions which modern economic theory regards as the principle subject-matter of economics, viz. the relation between means which exist in some degree of scarcity and their alternative uses for the satisfaction of needs and wants. We shall examine 'balance' under two aspects: first, the relation between means and their uses in a wider sense, as they exist and are balanced in the economic system of the society at large. In this sense economic balance can be equated with exchange and exchange-mechanisms. Secondly, economic balance can be approached from the angle of the economic unit, and understood in the sense of the relation existing between means and wants in the narrow compass of individual or group economy. Economic balance here can be equated with the relation between capacity to produce and the ability to satisfy existing wants, i.e. between income and expenditure.

Although the two aspects refer to the same phenomenon, and are thus clearly interdependent, it is necessary to point out that the relation between the two does not invariably lie on the surface. Certain wants which greatly influence individual economy do not enter openly into general exchange relations. I refer here to wants which flow from specifically social sources—the dictates of religious obligations, of etiquette, status and prestige, political interests, and so forth. Over and above the overt exchange-mechanisms which we study under the first aspect of economic balance we shall have to introduce, in the discussion of the second aspect, a certain 'invisible' exchange—exchange against such imponderables as moral values, or forms of social appreciation. We will examine these two aspects of economic balance in the order in which we have enumerated them.

CURRENCY, MEASURES, AND PRICES

436 The description of Nupe production has clearly established the nature of Nupe economy as a highly complex exchange-economy based on money. A discussion of exchange-mechanisms may thus profitably begin with the examination of the units of exchange, the currency, and certain fixed measures used in trade.

Before the adoption of British money cowrie-shells constituted the currency of the country. Its use still lingers—not in the currency that is actually used (although this, too, has been mentioned),[1] but in an abstract sense, in the native methods of reckoning money. Certain standardized amounts, e.g. bride-price, certain traditional gifts and payments, are expressed more often in cowrie-shells than in modern money. In the country figures in cowrie-shells are quoted commonly, and in connexion with every kind of payment, including food-prices and suchlike. Cowrie-

[1] See p. 310.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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Cowrie-shells are a clumsy currency: you have to carry them about in bagfuls, and to count in thousands and tens of thousands. The numerical system of Nupe is fully equal to this task. Its elaboration and lucidity is not the least contribution to the efficiency of the exchange system of the country. Its scope is practically unlimited. A figure like 3,600,000 is expressed by this comparatively simple symbol: *gba kpotwani* (lit. two thousand times eighteen hundred, or, in more detail, two thousand times two hundred times nine). This facility in forming large numbers is due to the existence of a number of simple root words and multiples which are easy to handle. Omitting here the simpler figures 1–9, we find root words for 100, 200, and 2,000, multiples of 100 and 1,000 being formed by a simple multiplication of the root figures. For example, 400 is 200 . 2, i.e. *kpa gúba*, contracted to *kpoba*; 600 is 200 . 3, i.e. *kpa gúta*, contracted to *kpota*; 4,000 is 2,000 . 2, i.e. *gba gúba*, contracted to *gboba*; 6,000 is 2,000 . 3, i.e. *gba gúta*, contracted to *gbaotá*; 10,000 is 2,000 . 5, i.e. *gba gútsũ*, contracted to *gbotsũ*; and so on. A new unit is introduced as an alternative symbol for 20,000 cowries in the form of the *gura*, which is the name for the grass bags in which cowries were formerly packed. Thus 200,000 cowries (the traditional bride-price) make 10 *gura*; 400,000 20 *gura*, and so on.

The exchange rate between cowries and British money appears to have undergone some change. The original exchange rate, which I ascertained from the account of bride-price and tribute paid formerly, was 8*d.* for 2,000 cowries. Later the exchange value of cowries rose to 1*s.* for 2,000 cowries. This exchange rate is applied to-day when figures are quoted in cowries. Although cowrie-shells represented a currency in the strict sense of the word, they were used also for certain other purposes beside exchange, and had, above all, a certain value as ornaments. Gourds, bags, and musical instruments were formerly ornamented with cowries; but this practice has fallen into disuse.

To this elaborate system of units of exchange corresponds an almost as well-defined system of measures applied to commodities. We have spoken already of the *kpere*, the 'arm-length', a standard length used in measuring cloth; 10 *kpere* give, as we have seen, one full-length cloth. The measures used in selling agricultural produce are even more interesting, as quantities of these commodities do not lend themselves easily to simple forms of standardization. The unit for unthreshed grain is the bundle, *epa* (from *pa*, to tie up) or load, *kara*. It weighs very nearly 60 lb., but its size and weight vary a little according to the quality of the grain: of poorer grain there would be a larger quantity in the bundle, of better-class grain a proportionately smaller quantity, the main point being the equality in the value. Threshed grain is sold in large or small gourds, for which to-day tin bowls and basins are usually substituted. A large basinful of grain, *evo* (lit. gourd), contains twelve small bowls, *kpanu* (the latter taking a little over one pound). One bundle of unthreshed grain is reckoned to correspond to one *evo* of threshed grain. With maize five to six cobs are reckoned to give one small bowl of maize-flour. Rice is sold in large gourds (*evo*) or, more frequently, in small bowls, ten of which as a rule give one gourd. Beans are calculated in